



THE ESSENCE OF

ERROLL

GARNER

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GARNER**



In the arena of jazz pianists, Erroll Garner occupies a privileged position. This collection demonstrates his talent for exploring the many musical possibilities offered by a melody. Included are "Misty," "Moonglow," "Lullaby Of Birdland" and "Avalon."

1. Poor Butterfly (3:08)
2. Lover (3:10)
3. Penthouse Serenade (2:56)
4. Laura (2:45)
5. Avalon (4:09)
6. Lullaby Of Birdland (3:13)
7. April In Paris (5:03)
8. I'll Remember April (4:19)
9. It's Alright With Me (3:32)
10. Moonglow (5:27)
11. Misty (3:13)
12. If I Had You (4:26)

All selections are mono recordings

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LEGACY

1. Poor Butterfly (3:08)

(J. L. Golden-R. Hubbell)

mx. CO 44027, recorded 6/28/50

From the Columbia album, *Piano Moods*

CL 6139, released October 2, 1950

2. Lover (3:10)

(R. Rodgers-L. Hart)

mx. CO 44424, recorded 10/7/50

3. Penthouse Serenade (2:56)

(W. Jason-V. Burton)

mx. CO 45102, recorded 1/11/51

4. Laura (2:45)

(D. Raksin-J. Mercer)

mx. CO 45100, recorded 1/11/51

From the Columbia album, *Erroll Garner Gems*

CL 6173, released April 9, 1951

Erroll Garner, piano; John Simmons, bass;

Shadow Wilson, drums.

5. Avalon (4:09)

(A. Jolson-B. G. DeSylva-V. Rose)

mx. CO 48897, recorded 3/30/53

6. Lullaby Of Birdland (3:13)

(G. Shearing)

mx. CO 49128, recorded 3/30/53

From the Columbia album, *Erroll Garner*

CL 535, released November 2, 1953

Erroll Garner, piano; Wyatt Ruther, bass;

"Fats" Heard, drums.

7. April In Paris (5:03)

(V. Duke-E. Y. Harburg)

mx. unknown, recorded 9/19/55

8. I'll Remember April (4:19)

(D. Raye-G. DePaul-P. Johnston)

mx. unknown, recorded 9/19/55

9. It's Alright With Me (3:32)

(C. Porter)

mx. unknown, recorded 9/19/55

From the Columbia album, *Concert By The Sea*

CL 883, released 1955

Erroll Garner, piano; Eddie Calhoun, bass;

Denzil Best, drums.

10. Moonglow (5:27)

(W. Hudson-E. DeLange-I. Mills)

mx. CO 56120, recorded 6/7/56

From the Columbia album, *Music For Tired Lovers*

CL 651, released 1956

11. Misty (3:13)

(E. Garner)

mx. CO 56581, recorded 9/2/56

From the Columbia album, *Other Voices*

CL 1014, released 1957

12. If I Had You (4:26)

(J. Campbell-R. Connelly-T. Shapiro)

mx. CO 57327, recorded 2/6/57

From the Columbia album, *Soliloquy*

CL 1060, released 1957

Erroll Garner, piano solo

All selections are mono recordings

In the pantheon of jazz pianists, Erroll Garner occupies a privileged position. Despite the fact that he never studied music and never actually learned to read it, he became one of the foremost practitioners of the keyboard, developing in the process a style that was uniquely his own.

He was born on June 15, 1921, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and at age three could be found playing on the family piano the tunes he'd heard on phonograph records. By 1937, he was performing with local bands, and in 1943 he moved to New York where he quickly found a niche for himself in some of the jazz clubs that thrived at the time on 52nd Street.

Initially featured in the trio led by Sam Stewart, Garner eventually branched out on his own, working mostly with a bass player and a drummer, a format which suited his own musical sensitivity. He also began to record extensively for a multitude of labels, primarily as a soloist, but also in a wide range of setups with other renowned instrumentalists, and with the formations led by Georgie Auld and Boyd Raeburn. In 1949, he became a recording artist with Columbia Records.

While under contract to the label, he recorded some of his best known works, notably the justly celebrated *Concert By The Sea* (CK 40589), a live album that documented his appearance at the Carmel Jazz Festival in 1955.

This compilation, culling together selections from some of these albums, presents Garner in familiar moments, including his most famous composition, "Misty," in a recording from 1956.

Apart from the fact that these tunes display his uncanny feel for melodic variations on popular romantic themes, all rely on his characteristic playing in which, while detailing the main melody with his right hand, he pounded chords with his left hand, eliciting a percussive accompaniment effect that has been described as akin to an orchestral style.

Particularly representative of this are the standards, "I'll Remember April," with its quirky, dissonant exposition of the opening chords, that suddenly leads to the main melody, softly harmonized in the right hand; the fortissimi of the left hand against the main theme in "It's Alright With Me"; or the rich development of that other standard, "Lover."

Other moments of choice in this collection include "Poor Butterfly," written in 1916 by John L. Golden and Raymond Hubbell for *The Big Show*; "Penthouse Serenade," also known by the first line of its verse, "When we're alone," which was written in 1931 by Val Burton and Bill Jason, and was heard to best effect in the 1957 Bob Hope film, *Beau James*; "April In Paris," the popular tune created by Vernon Duke and E.Y. Harburg for the show *Walk A Little*

Faster; and the ever-popular and ever-beautiful "Laura," the main theme from the 1945 film, composed by David Raksin.

Possibly less well-known is "If I Had You," a delightful melody composed in 1928 by Ted Shapiro, Jimmy Campbell, and Reginald Connelly, which Erroll Garner tackles in a solo tour de force. Rounding out the selections heard in this new compilation are three all-time favorites—"Moonglow," written in 1934 by Will Hudson, Eddie DeLange and Irving Mills, which got a new lease on life after it was used to splendid effect in a crucial scene in the 1955 film, *Picnic*, starring Kim Novak and William Holden; "Lullaby Of Birdland," George Shearing's paean to the famous New York jazz club; and the 1920 "Avalon," which Al Jolson, B. G. DeSylva and Vincent Rose "borrowed" from the aria "E Lucevan Le Stelle" from Puccini's *Tosca*, resulting in a celebrated lawsuit, eventually won by Puccini and his publishers.

What ties these various tunes together is Garner's wonderful sense of pianistic rhythm, and the way in which he explores the many musical possibilities offered by their melodies. His approach to these songs is a rare treat, indeed, and a clear manifestation of his unique brand of artistry that has endured, despite changing trends in popular music.

—Didier C. Deutsch

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